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Newsletter: August 2017

UNSOM/UNDP Integrated Electoral Support Group (IESG) to the Federal Republic of Somalia

Highlights

- On 8 August, the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) addressed the House of the People responding to the questions raised during its previous visit to the Parliament on 26 July.
- On 17 August, a delegation from the NIEC visited Baidoa meeting representatives of the Federal Member State of South-West, including the State President who assured his support to the NIEC in fulfilling its constitutional mandate.
- On 24 August, United Nations Under-Secretary-General (USG), Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, visited the NIEC as part of a high-level visit to the country
- On 26 August, Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs, Reconciliation organized a coordination session with key partners of the Federal Government on the drafting process of the Electoral Law

1. Political-electoral overview.

a. NIEC's Presentation to Parliament



FIGURE 1. NIEC CHAIR PERSON GIVING HER PRESENTATION TO THE HOUSE OF PEOPLE

On 8 August, the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) continued its presentation to the House of the People on its achievements towards 2021 universal elections, after a first session was on 26 July. The NIEC was summoned by the House of the people to give a briefing and answer questions regarding the commission's work towards the path of "one person one vote". Members of Parliament commended the NIEC and noted that the Federal Government needs to increase its support in the areas of finance and security.

During the session, the NIEC was asked on their plans how to register voters given the country's current situation. Commissioner Khadija Osoble and the Secretary General informed the House that the NIEC is planning a voter registration feasibility study commencing in September and

that in different forms, voter registration can be conducted in a country recovering from violence and is experiencing insecurity.

On her part NIEC Chair, Halima Ismail Ibrahim said that “one person, one vote” elections is the only way the country can step out of 4.5 clan power sharing model which many see as the root to most of the country’s problems. Following the NIEC’s briefing to parliament, Speaker Jawari has conveyed to NIEC that he intends to set up an ad hoc parliamentary committee on elections.

b. NIEC’s outreach and engagement to the Federal Member State of South West.

On 17 August, a delegation of the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) led by its chair lady Ms. Halima Ismail Ibrahim paid a visit to Baidoa and met with the State President His Excellency Hon. Sharif Hasan Sheikh Adan and State Ministers to discuss plans for the 2021 Federal elections.



FIGURE 2. NIEC DELEGATION WITH SOUTH WEST PRESIDENT HIS EXCELLENCY HON. SHARIF HASAN SHEIKH ADAN

The Commission informed the stakeholders in South West of its achievements since its establishment, challenges faced, and the importance of cooperation between South West and the NIEC. The Commission also shared its five-year work plan, and informed about the plans for the registration of the political parties, including the opening of the office of the Registrar of Political Parties and. The council of ministers requested the commission to assist with the election in the South West state districts which will be held soon which forms the basis or rather the start of democratization. The Commission welcomed the plan laid down for the formation of federal state of south west which was formed by the people and emphasized to the council of

ministers the milestone towards universal suffrage by 2021. The commission also indicated their readiness to conduct the district elections in the south west state. The President of South West on his part offered his support to the Commission to fulfill its constitutional mandate confirmed in a letter. He later thanked the commission for the good job they've managed to do in the short time they've worked and their effort and hard work for the nation. He also stated his Governments commitment to work with the National Independent Electoral Commission to smoothen the tough work that lies ahead for the commission, underscoring the importance to start planning now for the universal elections in 2020/21. He also recommended putting in practice the lessons learnt from the 2016 electoral process.

c. Visit of the UN Under-Secretary-General (USG) to NIEC



FIGURE 3. UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL (USG), MR. JEFFREY FELTMAN, GIVING A PRESS CONFERENCE

On 24 August, United Nations Under-Secretary-General (USG), Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, visited the Somali National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) as part of a high-level visit to the country. The Commission presented Mr Feltman with its preparation plans for universal elections by 2020/21, the first general elections of the country since 1969. NIEC Chairperson Halima Ismail Ibrahim outlined the unprecedented task ahead as well as the necessary steps to be taken by all stakeholders on different fronts. Positive and determined about the prospect of holding universal elections in the country, the Chairperson highlighted that the entire process will

need continued political support from the Federal Government of Somalia and the international community, including the United Nations. She thanked the United Nations for its ongoing support to the NIEC and Somalia in general as the country moves towards democratization.

The NIEC 's work towards universal elections is supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), funded through the EU, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. A video of the USG's visit to the NIEC as well as to the Prime Minister can be found on the following link: <https://vimeo.com/230940719>



FIGURE 4. NIEC MEETING WITH UNITED NATIONS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL (USG) FELTMAN

d. MOIFAR Coordination meeting on the Electoral Law

On 26 August, MOIFAR organized a coordination session on the drafting process of the Electoral Law with key partners from the government, including the NIEC, representatives from the Office of the President as well as of the Prime Minister, a Member of the Parliament’s Committee on elections, the Ministry of Constitution, of Women Affairs and Human Rights, and of Justice. The aim is to strengthen coordination within the Government of key elements of the electoral law, in particular on the eventual choice of the electoral system.

It was agreed that MoIFAR, in collaboration with other partner institutions, will come up with a plan to fully comprehend the different electoral systems, including the pros and cons of each system and recommendations for the best option for Somalia. To strengthen coordination amongst key partners in the government it was further agreed that Election Taskforce will be established, to commend recommendations and play a coordination role among the election related institutions. The participants underscored that women’s rights and roles must be clearly stated in the laws and their rights have to be protected.

2. Project activities during the reporting period

a. Political Parties Registration Working Session



FIGURE 5 NIEC STAFF TOGETHER WITH THE REGISTRAR OF POLITICAL PARTY ATTENDING THE WORKING SESSION.

On 9 August, the Registrar of Political Parties convened a working session at the NIEC offices in Mogadishu reviewing draft forms to facilitate the submission of applications by political associations to register as political parties. This working session is contributing to building the capacity of the Registrar's office and support staff assigned to this process to fulfill its functions of registering of political associations.

On presenting on the status thus far the Registrar indicated the need for his office to be adequately equipped with office equipment, personnel and sufficient budget to operate and deliver on its

responsibilities. Citing the exposure and lessons learned during the Political Party Registration workshop held in Nairobi from 10-12 July, 2017, he reflected on the lessons learned as relevant and essential to be integrated into the daily operations of the office of the Registrar.

In attendance were Creative Associates, the Oslo Center and the IESG. A recap on legislative requirements was given by IESG covering criteria for the establishment of a political party and composition of membership. In addition, an outline of recommended structure and management was presented to facilitate liaison with associations aspiring to register, enhance accurate record keeping, and ensure transparency that they are all privy to the same information. The draft registration forms were presented as work-in-progress with further discussions to finalize them.

b. NIEC observation mission to the Kenya elections

On 31 July, the NIEC team with logistical support from IESG visited Kenya on an Election Observation mission. During their visit the Commissioners had a chance to visit the Independent Electoral and Boundary Commission (IEBC) to observe the preparations being undertaken for the elections. The commissioners also had the opportunity to visit the "BOMAS" conference hall in Nairobi where the results would be displayed. They could see the integration of IT into an electoral process and the efficiency it brings into the process itself. After visiting different polling centres on election day, the Commissioners observed the live streams of election results. They had an informal meeting with several IEBC commissioners including the CEO and the



FIGURE 6. NIEC COMMISSIONERS OBSERVING THE MOCK ELECTIONS AT BOMAS.

chairperson Mr. Wafula Chebukati. The commissioners were assured of support from the Kenyan commission to enable them get more experience and insight into running and election.

In addition, on 31 August, IESG facilitated the mission of the NEIC Deputy Chair, Mr. Sayed Ali Mohamed, attending the third general assembly of the Association of the World Election Bodies (A-WEB), held in Bucharest, Romania. During the session the request for membership presented by the NIEC has been accepted

earlier in 2017, along with the ones from Papa New Guinea, Colombia and Peru. The Organization for the Arab Electoral Management Bodies also became an associate member of the AWEB. The NIEC, also member of the Arab EMBs since 2016, intends to capitalize on the electoral experience and knowledge of these international institutions.

3. Upcoming Activities

- Feasibility study to the regions on Voter Registration
- NIEC 2016 Lessons Learned Workshop
- Launch of the Lexicon and NIEC's Strategic Plan 2017-2021
- NIEC donor coordination meeting (20 September)
- Board Meeting: UNDP/UNSOM Joint Programme for electoral support (27 September)